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ABSTRACT

Ways that East Texas State University (ETSU) can establish systematic and continuous program evaluations to conform to accreditation standards for institutional effectiveness are discussed. The historical background to educational evaluation in America is traced, and archetypes for assessment of educational outcomes are considered. Section III of the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges' Criteria for Accreditation is examined, with attention to evaluating institutional effectiveness, specifying expected educational results and how achievement of the results will be determined, 10 procedures to evaluate instructional programs, and institutional research. ETSU's mission statement and its models for assessment of undergraduate and graduate students are considered, along with an articulated model for the University Studies program. Because of the importance of the faculty's ability to develop its own assessment methods for individual programs, guidelines are presented for selecting a standardized test and for developing a local test. An example of an assessment document is provided using the Universities Studies program as the topic. A time line for defining plans to meet Section III requirements is included. (SW)

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Responding to Section III of the Southern Association's Criteria for Accreditation: A Working Paper

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Norbert Elliot

Assistant Professor of Literature and Languages

Paul Zelhart

Professor of Psychology

Associate Vice President for Academic Programs and Services

August 1987

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Executive Summary

The following document explores the historical issues and current applications surrounding the assessment of educational outcomes. Prompted by national, regional, and local calls for the evaluation of institutional effectiveness, the authors have attempted to set a frame of reference for East Texas State University's response to program evaluation.

As the promises of universal education have become realities for many Americans during the past eighty seven years, educational institutions have come to realize that providing programs is no assurance that these programs are operating effectively. As a result, systematic and integrative assessment has come to be acknowledged as a safeguard to the educational rights of all citizens. Responding to this paradigm shift toward greater student-centerdness, the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges and the Texas Coordinating Board have adopted language indicating that assessment practices are central to ascertaining the effectiveness of educational institutions in serving their constituents.

As emphasized throughout the present working paper, the nature of program evaluation is congruent with the historical values of East Texas State University. A student oriented curriculum designed to serve the needs of our region, an investigative faculty devoted to evaluating and promoting the values of its programs, an informed administration committed to providing a forum for learning – these have been and are the values of our University. As such, faculty, students, and administrators should realize that our institution has long been sensitive to the evaluation of its educational objectives.

Therefore, the authors have speculated systematically regarding a model by which our institution may preserve its place as an educational leader. Through the coordination of nationally and locally designed assessment practices, our institution may fully come to realize that environment in which faculty come together from across the disciplines to formulate, execute, analyze, and refine the aims and practices of the educational community.

Challenging times demand creative and timely responses. We would hope that the following working paper, suggestive and argumentative in its nature, will stimulate the educational community here at East Texas State University to discussion of creative and timely assessment of our University's educational efforts.

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1. Introduction: The Aim of this Working Paper

In its 1984 Criteria for Accreditation, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools called for its member institutions to provide systematic evaluation of educational programs: "The level of institutional quality depends not only on an institution's educational processes and resources but also on the institution's successful use of these processes and resources to achieve established goals. Institutions have an obligation to all constituents to evaluate effectiveness and to use the results in a broad-based continuous planning and evaluation process"(10).

In order to respond to the Southern Association's call for proof of institutional effectiveness, the authors of the present work have tried to articulate issues and suggest methods by which East Texas State University may actively establish systematic and continuous programs evaluation. The authors wish to stress that their ideas are intended to serve as a stimulus rather than a prescription for discussion. Their aim has been to provide information and prompt discussion so that the E.T.S.U. community may develop programs which address the Southern Association's call for evaluation of institutional effectiveness.

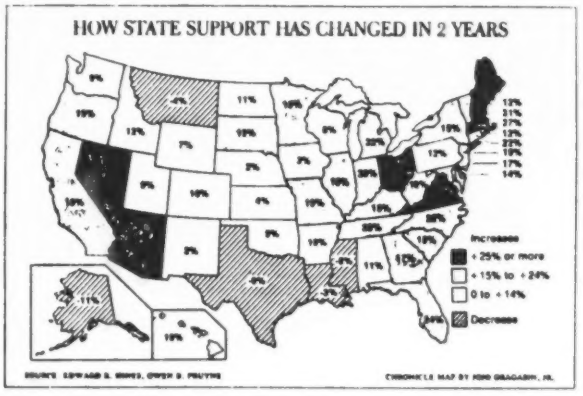
2. Historical Notes: Educational Evaluation in America

Although education in America during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was classically oriented and elitist, by the 1830s social policy, striving to fulfill the promises of democracy, began to press for free universal elementary schooling. By the turn of the century this goal had been achieved. Once achieved, however, an ambitious nation realized that advanced training of its citizens was essential to a strong social and economic structure; therefore, demands for secondary education became greater. Still later in the century, the same themes again came into play as high school diplomas became merely a step along the way to a college degree.

Concurrent with the expansion of the goals and costs of American education was an increased emphasis on accountability. As the promises for a true public schooling have become realized, mere illustration that services are provided is no longer adequate. Educational institutions have come to realize that serving their students and knowing their capabilities are synonymous activities. In present day America it is the uncommon educational endeavor which does not provide for assessment of that endeavor. Simply put, evaluation has become a part of educational America.

These historical developments are not to suggest that assessment is a simplistic issue. Assessment must index complex programmatic and environmental factors. Economically, for instance, from World War II until the 1980s our public universities enjoyed a period of tremendous growth. The National Defense Education Act of 1958,the National Science Foundation, the Ford Foundation grants of 1967 – all are indicative of historically unprecedented financial support for the American college curriculum. Yet in 1982-1983, due to complex economic constraints effecting every segment of all American institutions, the total financial appropriation by state governments for higher education was increased by only 6% over the previous year. This level of support was the lowest percentage of increased funding in twenty years.

Here in Texas, educators have witnessed a 9% decrease in state support for higher education, as the map below indicates:



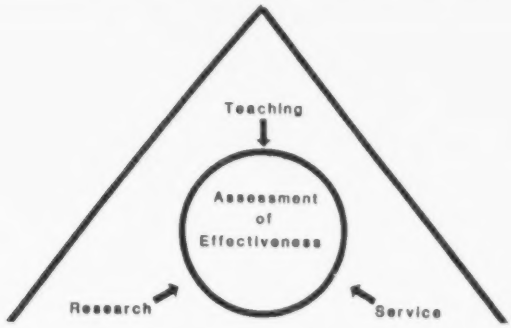
(Chronicle 1)

In fact, Texas presently ranks 49th in the nation in terms of percentage increases in funding for education (Chronicle 21).

The issue of assessment, then, is made more complex by economic constraints. How do we begin to undertake assessment, educators justifiably ask, in a period of economic crisis? Effective assessment requires funding and time, both of which are in short supply throughout educational America. A college instructor's professional life is divided among scholarship, teaching, and service; now another factor – assessment – must be addressed, still another demand for which there appear to be few rewards.

Clearly, there is no simplistic solution to this very real, very immediate dilemma. Perhaps one useful path to investigate, though, might be to adopt a unified attitude toward our professional lives in which scholarship, teaching, service, and assessment come to be viewed not as mutually exclusive activities but as complementary intellectual activities which, taken together, give our lives authenticity and substance. The diagram below suggests such a vision:

Student-Centered Aim of East Texas State University



Unified in an atmosphere of student-centerdness, educational activities take on new vitality and meaning.

Perhaps examples taken from among our faculty would serve here. Through the Department of Literature and Languages, the North East Texas Writing Project promotes state-of-the-art strategies in the teaching of writing for public school teachers in Region 10 and then empirically evaluates the work of students enrolled in the classes of these teachers. Also of that Department, Drs. Jon Jonz and Fred Tarpley work extensively with area teachers in the instruction of English as a second language and have reported to national audiences the results of their work; and Dr. Ann Moseley has published on the curriculum of our University's Communication Skills Center. In the Department of Elementary Education, Drs. Michael Sampson and Joseph Vaughn work with teachers to develop effective methods in the teaching of reading. In the Department of Psychology, study programs developed by Dr. Bernadette Gadzella have been adopted by universities nationwide. Dr. Dean Ginther, also of the Department of Psychology, has published extensively on the use of personal computers in the classroom. Dr. Fred Blohm of the Department of Health, Physical Recreation, and Education has written on his investigation of physical education programs in Texas. In the Department of Elementary Education, Dr. Rosemarie Kolstad has been recognized internationally for her work in curriculum development, and Dr.Reba Hudson of the College of Education continues to assimilate and interpret information on the performance of our teacher education students in locally developed and nationally administered assessments.

On an interdisciplinary level, faculty from across the curriculum join in developing and reporting their efforts in student-centered activities. Our University Studies Program is informed by recent advances in general education philosophy and promises to be a national model, and our New Center for Learning has a long history of nationally reported program development. Under the coordination of Dr. Kolstad, Drs. James Kushland in the Department of Biology, Williard McDaniel

and Dev Chopra of the Department of Physics, and George Nixon of the Department of Chemistry have come together to contribute toward the development of a curriculum for science teachers. Too, Drs. William Richardson of the Department of Elementary Education, Kenneth Sheppard of the Department of Earth Sciences, Stephen Razniak of the Chemistry Department, and Dr. William Ogden of the Department of Secondary and Higher Education have developed programs in science education and reported their research nationally. In the Department of Special Education, Dr. Maximino Plata, along with colleagues, has received both regional and national recognition for work on the Junior Level Essay, our mandated rising junior examination. Of course, these examples are illustrative and not inclusive.

Such meaning and vitality expressed in these individuals and their research emphatically addresses the Southern Association's call for assessment of institutional effectiveness.It is a unified effort toward an educational community for which we strive here at East Texas State University. It is student-centerdness for which our institution is known, and it is that student-centerdness which we must preserve and protect.

In order to investigate more fully the nature of Section III, we will now turn to an analysis of that part of the Criteria.

3. Section III of the Criteria: An Interpretation

So that our interpretation of Section III may be advanced, we have reproduced below the entire text under consideration:

Section III
Institutional Effectiveness

The quality of education provided by member institutions is the primary consideration in the decision to confer or reaffirm accreditation. The evaluation of educational quality is a difficult task requiring careful analysis and professional judgment. Traditionally, accreditation has focused attention almost exclusively upon institutional resources and processes. It has usually been assumed that, if an institution has certain resources and uses certain processes, effective education will occur. A comprehensive approach to accreditation, however, takes into account not only the resources and processes of education (such as faculty and student qualifications, physical plant, fiscal resources and other elements addressed in the Criteria) but also the evaluation of the results of education and plans for the improvement of the institution's programs. The level of institutional quality depends not only on an institution's educational processes and resources but also on the institution's successful use of those processes and resources to achieve established goals. Institutions have an obligation to all constuents to evaluate effectiveness and to use the results in a broad-based, continuous planning and evaluation program.

3.1 Planning and Evaluation

To focus on the effectiveness of the educational program, the institution must establish adequate procedures for planning and evaluation. The institution must define its expected educational results and describe how the achievement of these results will be ascertained. Although no specific format for this planning and evaluation processes is prescribed,an effective process should include:

1. broad-based involvement of faculty and administration;
2. the establishment of a clearly defined purpose appropriate to collegiate education;
3. the formulation of educational goals consistent with the institution's purpose;
4. the development of procedures for evaluating the extent to which these educational goals are being achieved; and
5. the use of the results of these evaluations to improve institutional effectiveness.

In addition to establishing procedures for evaluating the extent to which their educational goals are being achieved, institutions should ascertain periodically the change in the academic achievement of their students. Procedures used to evaluate instructional programs may include: peer evaluation of educational programs; structured interviews with students and graduates; changes in students' values as measured by standard instruments of self-reported behavior patterns; pre- and post-testing of students; surveys of recent graduates; surveys of employers of graduates; student scores on standardized examinations or locally constructed examinations; performance of graduates in graduate school; performance of graduates of professional programs on licensure examinations; or, the placement of graduates of occupational programs in positions related to their fields of preparation.

Institutions with research or public service missions must develop and implement appropriate procedures for evaluating their effectiveness in these areas.

The appropriateness of any evaluation procedure depends upon the nature of the institution and the institution's goals for instruction, research and public service. The Commission on Colleges prescribes no set of procedures for use by an institution and recognizes that an effective program to evaluate institutional effectiveness will usually require the use of a variety of procedures.

3.2 Institutional Research

Because institutional research can provide significant information of all phases of a college or university program, it is an essential element in planning and evaluating the institution's success in carrying out its purpose. The nature of the institutional research function depends on the size and complexity of the institution and may vary from part-time operation to an office staffed by several persons. All institutions, however, must engage in continous study, analysis and appraisal of their purposes, policies, procedures and programs. Institutions should assign administrative responsibility for carrying our institutional research.

(Criteria 10-11)

As stressed in the previous section, the trend in education which emphasizes accountability for programs is present throughout Section III. The two introductory paragraphs argue that educational quality, the "primary consideration" in accreditation decisions, is tied to demonstrable measurement of that quality. Such assessment, the Southern Association implicitly argues, is not to be taken as a superficial measurement executed over a finite period. The assessment must be continuous, it must be broad based, and it must be tied to the goals of programs.

Subsection 3.1 further explains the planning and evaluation process by emphasizing the necessity of heightened focus: an articulation of the mission statements of the institution and its programs. Formally composed and unified in their goals across the curriculum, these mission statements will control the domain of the assessment as well as the selection of the instruments.

Subsection 3.1 further identifies ten procedures to evaluate instructional programs:

1. Peer evaluation of educational programs,
2. Structured interviews with students and graduates,
3. Changes in students' values as measured by standard instruments or self-reporting behavior patterns,
4. Pre- and post-testing of students,
5. Surveys of recent graduates,
6. Surveys of employers of graduates,
7. Student scores on standardized examinations or locally constructed examinations,
8. Performance of graduates in graduate school,
9. Performance of graduates of professional programs on licensure examinations,and
10. Placement of graduates of occupational programs in positions related to their fields of preparation.

Significantly, the Southern Association is not asking solely for positivistic pre-instruction/post-instruction design. Although pre- and post-testing of students is indeed part of the assessment process, it is not the only part. Testing, interviews, surveys, and longitudinal tracking of students are all part of a comprehensive program of evaluation. And again in Subsection 3.1. the Southern Association emphasizes the necessity of articulated mission statements defining "the nature of the

institution and the institution's goals for instruction" so that the procedures of assessment will flow naturally from the aims of instruction.

Finally, Subsection 3.2 suggests that institutional research be formally conducted through a central office. "Continuous study, analysis, and appraisal" require an established center to serve as a gathering point for information and as a forum for policy issues in assessment facing the institution.

In applying goals of Section III to E.T.S.U., we first must recall that, as an institution sensitive to the needs of its students, we already have in our command many of the assessment procedures identified in Subsection 3.1. Surveys such as those conducted by Dr. John Edwards, our Enrollment Manager, yield information about our present and potential students, and Dr. Reba Hudson, Assistant Dean of the College of Education, currently employs questionnaires to tell us about graduates of her college and their employers. Under Dr. John Davenport, the Department of Mathematics has begun to pre-test math students during orientation for placement purposes. Assessments conducted by the Department of Literature and Languages at both the basic skills and the junior level yield information about the writing abilities of students. The College of Business and Technology is currently considering use of the Core Curriculum Assessment Program developed by the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business. On the graduate level, diagnostic tests conducted by Drs. Dean Ginther and Joe Helton of the Department of Psychology allow that department's faculty to address the abilities of beginning graduate students.

This brief list could, of course, continue on for many pages, but the point is obvious: E.T.S.U. is already complying in many areas with the Southern Association's call for assessment of programs. As with many institutions of higher education, however, significant information is not readily available either to administrators or instructors. As a result, institutions appear to be more fragmented then they truly are. First and foremost, more systematic and integrative data collection procedures are needed across the curriculum.

A primary consideration for E.T.S.U., then, is to identify its existing programs, to gather information on existing program assessments, and to analyze how these assessments may be strengthened, expanded, and integrated. Our on-going process of assessment will then help us to shape and design our curriculum in light of empirical information which will supplement our practitioner's knowledge of our students.

Nevertheless, this initial gathering process will itself prove to be fruitless if we do not analyze our existing program assessments in light of our University's overall mission statement. We will now focus on that statement.

4. Our Mission Statement and Our Aims at E.T.S.U.: An Analysis

Below is E.T.S.U.'s mission statement:

> East Texas State University is a major center of learning for the Northeast Te... region. The university is responsible for teaching, scholarly research and creative activities, and public service.
>
> Through instructional programs of the highest quality the university develops the skills and knowledge necessary for professional success, personal growth, and responsible citizenship. Through both formal and informal activities, students have the opportunity to acquire knowledge; learn values and potentialities; and develop an enduring commitment to learning.
>
> Through support of research, scholarship and creative endeavors the university helps to advance human achievement and stimulate the intellectual growth of faculty, students, and all others who enjoy the products of these activities.
>
> Through the provision of information, facilities, research expertise, public education, and cultural activities, the university serves its constituency.

Upon analysis, we find our University is conceived in comprehensive terms: scholarship and teaching inform each other. In the context of ths approach, students begin to view themselves as holistic learners. They are encouraged toward "professional success, personal growth and responsible citizenship." Ultimately, students develop what John Henry Newman called a habit of learning.

In order to foster this habit, our University's mission statement suggests that programs not be defined merely as those components of our system through which degrees are granted. Instead, a program is better defined as those activities of E.T.S.U. which contribute to the advancement of our students' professional success, personal growth, and responsible citizenship. In light of this broader and more informed view of programs, ventures such as University Studies, Net Ole, the New Center for Learning, and the Center for Policy Studies take their place along with those programs leading to degrees at the bachelor's, master's, and doctor's levels.

As is the case with our methods of assessment discussed in the previous chapter, E.T.S.U. presently has well developed and successful programs at all levels. However, just as we must collectively evaluate our existing programs of assessment, so too must we delineate these existing programs themselves and decide which should receive priority in terms of assessment. Since steps toward giving priority to programs have already been undertaken under the supervision of the Associate Vice President for Academic Programs and Services and individual department heads, this process is already in progress.

With these issues of assessment and mission in mind, we may now offer some general paradigms for assessment and adapt these paradigms to our University's present needs.

5. Some Paradigms for Assessment

In the assessment of educational outcomes there are essential intelectual patterns – paradigms – which control the conditions of the assessment. Structurally, we might say that all assessments are controlled by paradigms centered around the concepts of aim, domain, and instrument.

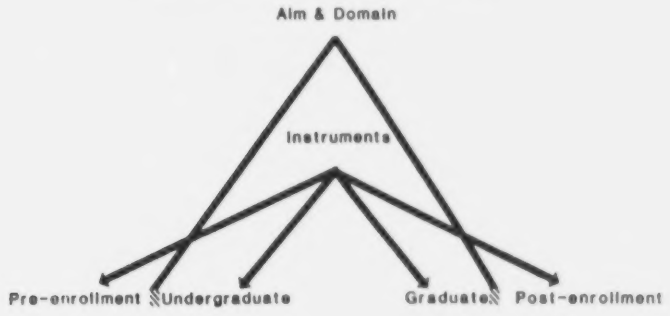
The aim of an educational assessment centers around the basic beliefs of a program. That is, we investigate the commitments of our programs and describe how these commitments might be implemented.

The domain of an educational assessment is based on distinctions between whether we wish to gather cognitive or affective information about our students (Ewell 13). In focusing on cognitive outcomes, we concentrate on gains in student knowledge. We seek, for instance, to measure increased knowledge of British literature or the ability to think critically. In focusing of affective outcomes, we concentrate on gains in student values. We seek to measure changes in attitudes, tolerance, or priority of judgments.

Instruments, those tests or surveys selected to serve the aim and domain of the evaluation, are chosen on the basis of whether they are nationally normed or locally developed. With nationally normed tests, we are able to see how our students perform in relationship to students across the nation. We therefore acquire a sense of broad-based performance, a sense which breaks down regional isolationism. Locally developed tests, on the other hand, afford those designing the assessment complete control of the nature and type of measurement. As a result, locally developed tests allow an enhanced sense of community among students, instructors, and administrators. As we come to understand the local characteristics of our students, programs, and faculty, we develop a cogent sense of the uniqueness of the institution, a uniqueness affording a sensitivity toward the needs of special populations such as handicapped and minority students. (We will turn to some guidelines for the adoption of nationally normed and locally developed tests in Section 7.)

With the concepts of aim, domain, and instrument in mind, we may formulate the archetypal model below for educational outcomes:

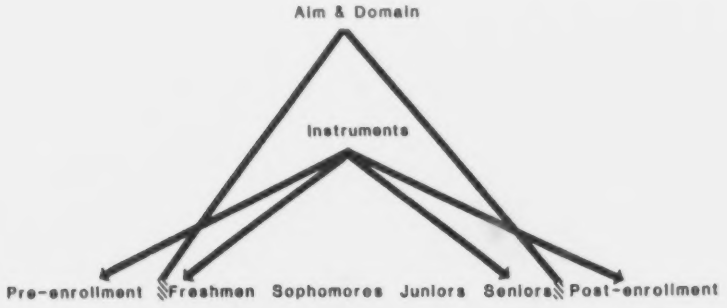
Universal Model for Assessment
of Educational Outcomes



As the model indicates, aim is the controlling factor in the assessment,determining not only the domain and instrument but also our frame of reference in assessing pre- and post-enrollment populations.

Based on this model, we may then formulate the diagram below for assessment of our undergraduate programs:

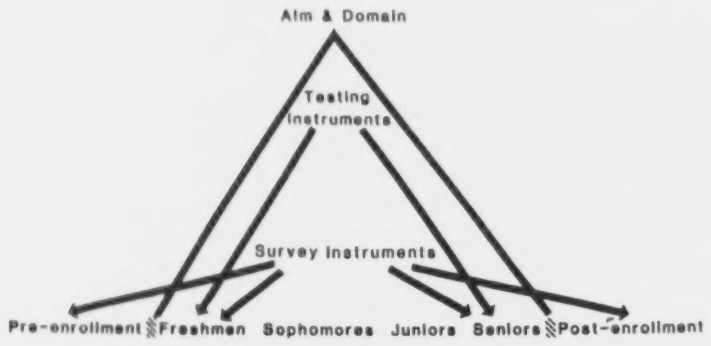
ETSU Model for Undergraduate Assessment



Here, we would employ assessment instruments at both the pre-enrollment and post-enrollment periods in order to better understand the expectations of and results from our efforts. Additionally, assessment at both the freshman and senior levels allows investigation of gains before and after comprehensive educational experiences.

To more explicitly define the nature of these assessments, we have indicated in the diagram below that testing and survey instruments would provide both cognitive and affective information:

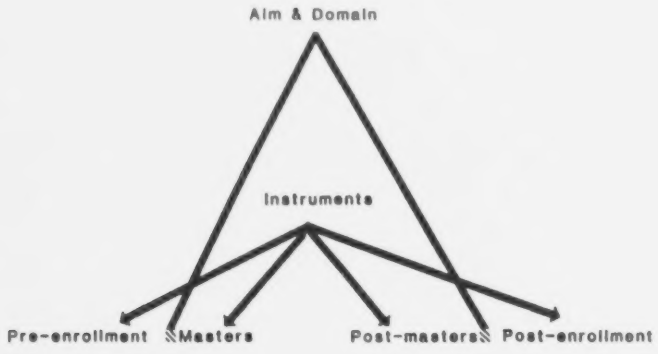
Defined ETSU Model for Undergraduate Assessment



Here, instruments have been defined as those which test and those which assess. Note that pre-testing has been suggested in the freshman year and post-testing in the senior year and that surveys may be undertaken before enrollment, during the freshman and senior years, and after enrollment. Such a pattern of testing and surveys will also limit the overall data collection process while yielding valuable information on our students.

Too, we may formulate a fundamental plan for graduate assessment:

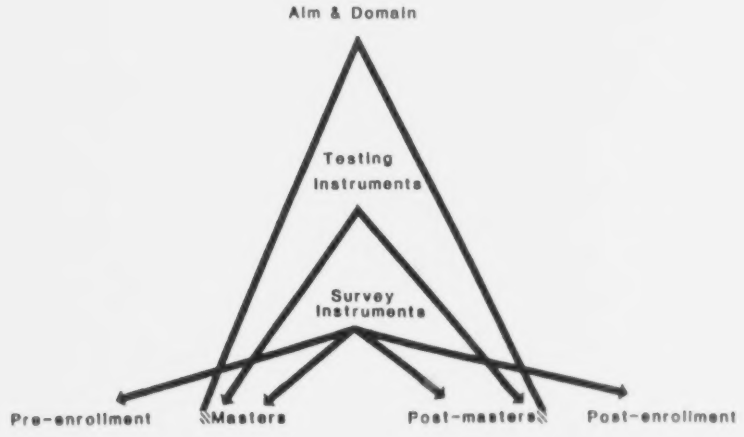
ETSU Model for Graduate Assessment



As the diagram above indicates, we must assess our students at both the master's and post-master's levels; as well, we may gain valuable information about the hopes and gains of our students in examining them before and after enrollment in our graduate programs.

Additionally, we may define this model below:

Defined ETSU Model for Graduate Assessment



Here, we indicate that at E.T.S.U. testing might occur at both the master's and post-master's levels and that surveys may be administered at all four levels of student progress.

Models of assessments such as those offered above have already proven effective in nationally recognized programs at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville (Banta), Northeast Missouri State University (McClain and Krueger) and Alverno College (Mentkowski and Loacker). In each case, the programs have proven successful, especially in those states such as Tennessee whose Higher Education Commission now applies academic performance criteria in funding of state colleges and universities. Research tells us that we have every reason to believe that the assessment models offered above will prove of value.

With these models in mind, we now present a case study in which an articulated model is offered for our University Studies program.

6. A Case Study: Assessing University Studies

Since our program of University Studies has recently been reformulated and is therefore perhaps the single program on campus most familiar to all faculty, it presents itself as a logical candidate for speculation about possible assessment procedures.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the aim of a particular program must be the place from which all further investigation develops. In order to address the assessment of University Studies at E.T.S.U., we therefore must begin with the philosophy of general education given below:

> General education is an essential element in the educational process that results in professional success, personal growth, and responsible citizenship. In this process, both formal and informal, students have the opportunity to acquire knowledge, learn reasoning and communication skills, examine their goals, values and potentialities, and develop an enduring commitment to learning.
>
> The general education program at ETSU embodies the characteristics and purposes of the university. As a university with both professional and liberal arts programs, ETSU recognizes general education as a necessary component in the development of all students.
>
> General education is not only compatible with specialization, but is the context in which specialization occurs. General education is a coherent program that places emphasis on common learning of a shared body of knowledge, the development of intellectual skills, and an appreciation and toleration of diverse attitudes and values.
>
> Specifically the general education program stresses breadth and provides a person with opportunities to perceive the integration of knowledge; involves the study of basic liberal arts and sciences; encourages understanding of our heritage as well as respect for other peoples and cultures; develops mastery of linguistic, analytical, and computational skills that are necessary for lifelong learning; and fosters development of such personal qualities as appropriate acceptance of ambiguity, empathy and acceptance of others, and an expanded understanding of self.
>
> (Report to Dr. Morris 4)

In selecting survey and testing instruments, we must realize that the domain of general studies is properly both affective and cognitive. The emphasis of University Studies is toward fostering throughout the undergraduate curriculum "a shared body of knowledge, the development of intellectual skills, and an appreciation and tolerance of diverse attitudes and values." Taken together, these aims suggest the changes in values most readily assessed by affective instruments. Of course, this is not to suggest that gains in specific kinds of knowledge are unimportant but rather that University Studies seeks to establish a meaningful context in which specialization will occur. Assessment of both the affective and cognitive domain are thus important to the success of our University Studies program.

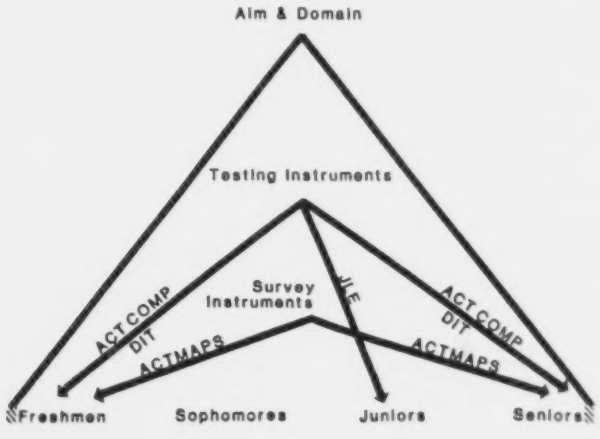
Based on Lawrence Kohlberg's developmental moral stages (xxix), James R. Rest's Defining Issues Test (DIT) would perhaps serve as an identifier of affective development in students enrolled in University Studies courses. As of 1986, over 500 studies with the DIT have provided significant information on those factors which prompt moral development as measured by that instrument, and it would be of use to the University Studies program to discover whether or not our program is addressing its aims of providing a ground for students to develop their values and potentialities. In the cognitive domain, the American College Testing (ACT) program's College Outcomes Measures Project (COMP) holds promise for a meaningful assessment of general studies. Over 300 colleges have used the COMP instrument, and formal studies of its effectiveness have also been conducted. Addressing six fundamental outcome areas – communication, problem solving, value classification, functioning within social institutions, using science and technology, and using the arts (Forrest 11-12) – the COMP seems tailored for our University Studies' emphasis on acquisition of knowledge, reasoning skills, and communication skills.

In order to have a locally developed instrument designed to assess our students' writing skills, our Junior Level Essay (JLE) has served us well in the past in helping us describe our students' ability to compose. Over 3,000 of our students have been effectively assessed in their writing skills through this instrument (Plata, Elliot, Zelhart), and there is every indication that it is sensitive to the skills of our unique student population here in Commerce.

In turning from testing to surveying, we believe that the sort of questionnaires offered by the College Board's Multiple Assessment Programs and Services (MAPS) would yield significant information about our students' opinions of University Studies. If administered at both the freshman and senior levels, we could trace our students' reactions to general studies here at E.T.S.U. and compare their reactions to other general studies programs across the country through the College Board network.

Therefore, an articulated plan for assessment of our University Studies program might resemble the diagram below:

Articulated ETSU University Studies Plan



Since University Studies is the one program at E.T.S.U. influencing the education of every student, the multiple assessment measures such as the ones described above would tell us a great deal about the development and progress of our students while addressing the Southern Association's call for evaluation of institutional effectiveness in Section III.

To more clearly understand how all programs at E.T.S.U. may address issues of assessment, we will now suggest guidelines for addressing issues of aim, domain, and instrument selection.

7. Developing Assessments of Individual Programs: Considerations for E.T.S.U. Faculty

In Sections 5 and 6 we focused on explaining some rather general systems for assessment and applying these to our situation here at East Texas State University. The key to our University's success in responding to Section III of the Criteria , however, rests on our faculty's ability to develop its own assessment methods for individual programs. In this section, therefore, concepts of aim, domain, and instrument will be more fully examined as they apply to E.T.S.U. program assessment.

To begin, we would argue that the aims of every program in our University must reflect the aims of E.T.S.U.'s mission statement. Specifically, we recommend that the mission statements, the aims of all programs, include emphasis on the following:

the program's ability to enhance education in the Northeast region of Texas;
the program's ability to unify teaching, scholarly research and creative activities, and public service;
the program's emphasis on professional success, personal growth, and responsible citizenship;
the program's emphasis on diverse types of educational experiences for students so that their intellectual and moral growth may be enhanced; and
the program's emphasis on how its specific knowledge contributes to an individual's holistic view of success.

Essentially, every program should be considered in terms of its overall student-centerdness. The stated domain of each program will properly focus on a combination on the cognitive and affective realms. That is, an effective program will focus on:

gains in student knowledge, and
gains in student values.

A sensitive combination of these domains in a program description will strive to show how increases in specific knowledge contribute to an attitude of understanding and comprehensiveness in our students.

Based on aim and domain, instruments may be conceived in terms of standardized and locally developed assessments. Standardized assessments, defined as those "commercially prepared by experts in measurement and subject matter"(Mehrens and Lehmann 7), are helpful in allowing their users to compare students' performance to other examinees who have taken the assessment. Locally developed measures, on the other hand, allow their developers greater control of the content of the assessment and of subtlety in its interpretation.

Of course, both standardized and locally developed assessments may be used to measure the cognitive and effective domains. In selecting a cognitive measure of writing ability for a general studies program, for instance, a faculty might use the standardized Test of English Composition developed by the College Board's Multiple Assessment Programs and Services. Similarly, a standardized affective survey might include the Terminal and Instructional Value Scales by Rokeach or the Self Defining Issues Test by Rest.

In investigating locally developed cognitive assessments, a faculty might develop an holistically scored essay examination such as our own Junior Level Essay. In the affective domain, faculty might develop a form of the well-known Likert scale to measure the attitudes of students.

In order to understand more clearly our own goals in deciding to use standardized or locally developed assessments, the following guidelines might prove helpful:

Guidelines for Selecting a Standardized Test

1. Is the aim of the assessment suited to the domain and instrument under consideration?
2. Is the purpose and recommended use of the instrument explicitly described in the test manual provided by the publisher?
3. What degree of success has the instrument yielded for populations similar to those under consideration?
4. How recently has the instrument been developed? That is, has the instrument's design been informed by recent pertinent research?
5. Does the instrument follow the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing set forth by the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education?
6. Is the cost of the instrument acceptable?

(Derived from Mehrens and Lehmann 34-35)

Guidelines for Developing a Local Test

Have the issues in the following basic test development procedure been addressed?

1. Decide central issues:
   - purpose
   - characteristics of population
   - use of test
   - implications of use of test
   - cost
   - type of assessment
   - selection of test development committee
   - selection of item writers
   - time line

2. Preparing to write the test
   (Specifications defined by test development committee)
   - purpose
   - subject to be tested
   - population
   - use of test
   - implications of test
   - timing
   - number and types of items
   - statistical specifications
   - anticipated disadvantages
   - anticipated advantages

3. Writing the test
   - item writers construct test
   - item writers review test

4. Pretesting of items
   - analysis of validity,reliability, and bias of pretest

5. Preparing final form of test
   - printing
   - copying

6. Preparing population to be tested
   - public disclosure of specifications through correspondence and media
   - availability of test development committee

7. Administering the test
   - instructions for administrators
   - security of test

8. Scoring the test
   - methods dependent on type of assessment

9. Analyzing test results
   - validity, reliability, and bias

10. Documenting results of test

11. Interpreting test results to public
    - correspondence and media

12. Observing how test influences instructor and student behavior

13. Analysis of procedure and results by test development committee

14. Presenting and publishing test development procedures and results
    - correspondence
    - workshops
    - conferences
    - articles
    - monographs
    - books

(Derived from Alloway and Conlan 2)

Whatever our decision in selecting an instrument, we should keep in mind a few central ideas when selecting developing our evaluative procedures.

First, we need to remember that the development of all assessment measures is radically historical. The specific aims of a particular program must be discussed, analyzed, and expressed before a particular type of instrument may be either selected or developed. Far too often there are

tendencies for new programs of assessment to adopt, unexamined, either a standardized test or another institution's locally developed test, thus creating misunderstandings among administrators, instructors, and students. The process of a specific group of instructors assembling to look intelligently and deeply at their own programs is critical to the success of any assessment of that program. Individuals must come together in a spirit of inquiry to investigate specific phenomenon (in our case, specific programs) and, through a process of dialogue, achieve concensus.

Second, we hold that in a community wide assessment, the entire community must participate in the assessment's development. Program assessments must be established in a spirit of freedom and openness, and we must ensure that the academic community affected by our programs share in the opportunity of developing the assessment of that program. All involved in a specific program must participate in shaping that program's assumptions, practices, and assessment procedures.

Third, we hold that the connections between assessment and classroom teaching must always and everywhere be present. The educational impulse of our profession--to question and clarify--should thus guide us as we begin to investigate the relationships between instruction and assessment.

Finally, we must remember that assessment is a process that must proceed in a dialectic, recursive pattern. As we establish our tests and surveys, we must therefore not suggest that assessment of programs takes place on a one-time basis over a finite period. Ultimately, the process of assessment must reflect the process of program development itself.

With these considerations in mind, we may now turn to the expression of programs of assessment through what may be called the Assessment Document.

8. Developing the Assessment Document

After each program at E.T.S.U. is identified, those responsible for that program will begin to discuss how it may be most effectively evaluated. When the best method of evaluation is decided upon, the program developers will compose a report which we have termed the Assessment Document. The purpose of this Document is to define for the rest of the university community an integrative set of descriptions and plans which delineate the background, aim, domain, and assessment instruments of the program. Taken together, these Documents will provide a unified picture of programs and assessment practices.

To indicate the shape that the Assessment Document might take, we have drafted the following mock paper which discusses the assessment of our own University Studies program:

The Assessment of University Studies: A Plan

Background:

In October of 1982, the Vice President of Academic Affairs appointed a University General Studies Committee and charged it to investigate a plan for action in the implementation of a general studies curriculum at East Texas State University. Workshops, surveys, and position papers followed over the next three years until the spring of 1985 when a draft of a proposal for a general studies curriculum was circulated among the faculty. After the proposal was revised and suggestions for general studies courses were submitted from disciplines across the curriculum, a program of University Studies was completed during the spring of 1987.

Aim:

University studies is an essential element in the educational process that results in professional success, personal growth, and responsible citizenship. In this process, both formal and informal, students have the opportunity to acquire knowledge, learn reasoning and communication skills, examine their goals, values, and potentialities, and develop an enduring commitment to learning.

The University Studies program at E.T.S.U. embodies the characteristics and purposes of the University. With both professional and liberal arts programs, E.T.S.U. recognizes general education as a necessary component in the development of all students. The general education which takes place in the University Studies program is therefore not only compatible with specialization but is the context in which specialization occurs.

University Studies is a coherent program that places emphasis on common learning of a shared body of knowledge, the development of intellectual skills, and an appreciation and toleration of diverse attitudes and values.

Specifically, the University Studies program:

stresses breadth and provides a person with opportunities to perceive the integration of knowledge;

involves the study of liberal arts and sciences;

encourages understanding of our heritage as well as respect for other people's cultures;
develops mastery of linguistic, analytical, and computational skills that are necessary for lifelong learning; and
fosters development of such personal qualities as appropriate acceptance of ambiguity, empathy and acceptance of others, and an expanded understanding of self.

Domain:

University studies strives to enhance student knowledge and values. The program therefore promotes both cognitive and affective development in order to foster a complete sense of intellectual and moral development.

Instruments:

So that student knowledge and values may be evaluated, assessment instruments will focus on both testing and surveying. The American College Testing program's College Outcomes Measurement Project is currently proving quite successful in helping faculty at institutions such as the University of Tennessee at Knoxville to assess their general studies program. This standardized test would be given at both the freshman and senior year so that gains in student knowledge and reasoning may be addressed.

A second standardized test, the Defining Issues Test, serves to assess the affective domain. The Defining Issues Test is currently used by such model general studies programs as Alverno College in Milwaukee. To assess the growth of our students, this test would be given along with the College Outcome Measurement Project test in both the freshman and senior years.

A locally developed test, our Junior Level Essay is the present form of a test of writing ability begun in 1950 at our University. With revision of the instrument in 1984, the test has served E.T.S.U. students well in helping faculty to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the examinees' writing ability. The Junior Level Essay will be given at the junior year so that students whose skills are shown to be deficient may be placed in coursework so that their skills may be strengthened by the end of the senior year.

Finally, our students may be surveyed in their attitudes toward academic and career interests through the Comparative Interest Index of the American College Testing program. The Index, yielding scores on eleven scales derived from academic disciplines, would tell us a good deal about the developing interests of our students. To tailor this survey to our program, we may insert twenty-five items of our own design. So that we may track our students' shifting attitudes, we will administer this survey both in our freshman and senior years.

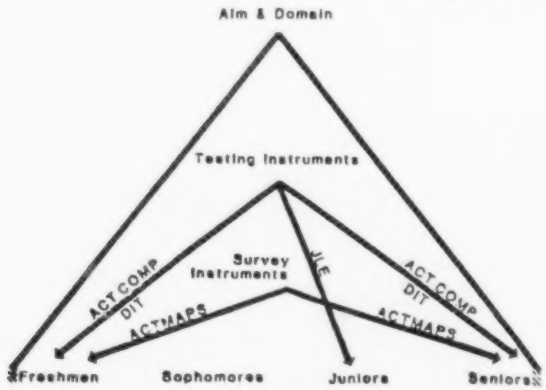
Schedule:

Assessment procedures will commence in the fall of 1988. Since our University Studies program will be fully in place by that time, we will begin our assessments next fall and continue them for a four year period through 1992. Throughout this process, information will be gathered, interpreted, and communicated to University Studies faculty so that our on-going program of assessment may influence curriculum.

Summary:

The assessment procedure for University Studies at E.T.S.U. is suggested in the diagram below:

Articulated ETSU University Studies Plan



This comprehensive assessment program will clearly comply with the Southern Association's call for assessment of educational outcomes. As significant, this assessment program will provide our faculty with meaningful information about the effectiveness of their student-centered efforts.

The sample Assessment Document above illustrates the sort of briefly documented narrative report which, when completed by the faculty responsible for the program, will provide unity for a university wide evaluation of institutional effectiveness. Specifically, the aim of the Assessment Document points to the integrative aims of the program, aims reflected in both the cognitive and affective domains. The instruments for the assessment employ both standardized and locally developed measures, thus affording both national comparisons and unique information about our specific situation.

So far in this working paper we have tried to provide an approach to the evaluation of educational outcomes. To this end, we have offered historical background, archetypes for assessment, and interpretation and application of these archetypes. With the contours of our assessment situation defined, in the next section we will suggest a time line for E.T.S.U.'s response to Section III.

9. Establishing a Time Line

By September 1, 1988, all post-secondary institutions in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools have been required to file a detailed report defining plans to meet Section III requirements. To meet that deadline, at this writing only twelve months away, we offer the following time line:

Major Phases
9/1/87-9/1/88

Phase 1
(Months 1-3)

Identify and define focus for all program aims. Establish central authority for coordination for the project. Identify institutional researchers.

Phase 2
(Months 4-5)

Call for, review, and revise written aims of programs to create institutional unity.

Phase 3
(Months 6-8)

Meet with individual program developers to discuss preparation of Assessment Documents.

Phase 4
(Month 9)

Call for Assessment Document from individual programs.

Phase 5
(Months 10-11)

Review Assessment Documents, revise if necessary, and formulate long term plans for assessment of institutional effectiveness.

Phase 6
(Months 12 and following)

Local, regional, and national dissemination of information.
Commence assessments.

A plan of action such as this will allow our University community to have in our possession a comprehensive plan of assessment within a one year period. In following such a plan, we will have identified and established

a central authority for assessment,
a statement of the aims of every program on campus, and
a plan for evaluation of these programs.

Once our frame of reference is set, we have but to unify our existing assessment efforts and begin to develop and implement those instruments new to us. As the data from our assessments is interpreted, we may begin to shape and refine our programs so that their aims may more explicitly meet the needs of our students.

Once our assessment program begins to come to fruition, we will be in a stronger position to meet the requirements of both the Texas Coordinating Board and the Southern Association. In its Regular Session the 70th Texas Legislature adopted and the governor signed into law many of the major recommendations of the Select Commission on Higher Education. Among that legislation is House Bill 2181 which stipulates that the Coordinating Board will allocate "incentive funding, as a percentage of base funding, among institutions to reward those that have achieved goals set by the Board in such areas as minority recruitment, graduation rates, meeting planning goals, and energy conservation, among others" (Temple 2). Additionally, the Board will also allocate "special initiative funding among institutions to promote academic excellence" (Temple 2). Clearly, the language of this legislation suggests that leadership in the evaluation of educational outcomes will be rewarded. Regarding the Southern Association, E.T.S.U. will be undergoing a mid-term evaluation next year. Five years from that date our institution will be seeking reaccreditation. By that time, we must able to provide the Association with exact empirical information on the success of our programs.

In essence, the assessment of educational outcomes in an idea whose time has come.

10. Conclusions: Assessment of Educational Programs at E.T.S.U.

We ended the last section by arguing that we ought to begin systematic, on-going program evaluation because the political/legal structure of our educational system demands it. Yet we do not want to leave the impression that this situation exists because empiricism has somehow gotten out of hand and we are being victimized by the technological elements of modern society. Instead, we want to conclude this working paper by arguing that education in America is currently undergoing a paradigm shift and the resulting current political/legal structure is but a reflection of that shift.

In his now classic The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Thomas S. Kuhn posited that intellectual systems – the paradigms of a profession – shift when the existing conceptions of that profession reveal shortcomings. In reference to science, Kuhn writes, "when the profession can no longer evade anomalities that subvert the existing tradition of scientific practice – then begin the extraordinary investigations that lead the profession at last to a new set of commitments, a new basis for the practice of science." (6)

Such paradigm shifts have been noted over the past decade in professions such as English (Hairston), psychology (Manicas and Secord) and education (Giroux and McLaren). Indeed, it might be argued that the entire educational endeavor is currently undergoing those shifts that Kuhn describes.

The prevailing conception of American higher education, unfortunately, still rests in the platonic notion of the Academy, that grove where teacher and disciples met in a purely intellectual atmosphere unrestrained by an administrative framework. As Peter M. Blau points out, however, "a romantic pleading for a return to a small community of scholars fails to take into account the demands made on higher education in modern society "(10). The shift from an agrarian to an industrial base. the rise of literacy, the demands of a democratic society – all point to the simple fact that there is no going back to a pastoral, innocent time. If we reflect carefully, we will recall that the past, a time in which the few benefited from the slavish labor of the many, was itself no glorious time.

More specifically, recent national reports such as the much quoted National Institute of Education's Involvement in Learning: Realizing the Potential of American Higher Education point to the overwhelming need for a student oriented atmosphere. The authors write that:

> federal and state agencies, private foundations, colleges and universities, research organizational, and researchers concerned with higher education should focus their funding strategies and research activities on how to facilitate greater student learning and development. (74)

Again, here is indiciated the need for a re-invention, a paradigm shift, for higher education.

In responding to these calls, E.T.S.U. administrators and faculty need not envision themselves about to embark on a Herculean labor. We should remember that

E.T.S.U. is an institution known for its student-centerdness,
E.T.S.U. already has in its possession a great deal of empirically formulated information about its students,
E.T.S.U. is an educational leader in its region, and
E.T.S.U. has always taken control in demanding situations.

In essence, E.T.S.U.'s administration and faculty already possess the criteria for success.

In conclusion, then, the authors of the present work wish to call for discussion of methods to assess educational outcomes within our community.

11. A Reader's Guide to Research in Institutional Effectiveness

"The process of nongovernmental accreditation," Kenneth E. Young and Charles M. Chambers tell us, "is uniquely American " (90). It is the distinctly democratic nature of educational assessment that has prompted so much diverse scholarship over the past eighty years. Educational assessment is tied to the very nature of our society, and therefore the resulting research has been broad as well as deep. We do not exaggerate in stating that research in educational effectiveness as it relates to the process of accreditation is itself a discipline.

Difficult as it is to find a point of entry, perhaps the best place to begin is with an understanding of the history of competency testing as set forth by David K. Cohen and Walter Haney. From that history readers might deepen their understanding by looking into Fred. F. Harcleroad's history of evaluation of educational programs in the U.S. since 1640.

In order to contextualize our situation here in the south, we might then read in detail the Southern Association's Criteria for Accreditation and its Manual for Accreditation. With this specific background in mind, readers may turn to model programs of assessment described by Trudy W. Banta, Charles J. McClain and Darrell W. Krueger, and Marcia Mentkowski and Georgine Loacker.

From here, readers may begin to venture forth through the monograph series sponsored by the Association for Institutional Research and published by Jossey-Bass. Currently, there are over fifty-six titles in this splendid series. In this series, a helpful system of bibliographical methodology is offered by Eugene C. Craven.

In order to help those interested in research in institutional evaluation, the authors of the present work have compiled as a separate document a brief anthology of selected readings in the assessment of educational outcomes. We hope that the pieces contained there are both helpful and provocative.

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